THE NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • THURSDAY • MAY 21, 2026 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 20 • LATE CITY EDITION

April core sector growth at 1.7%

Production growth in eight core infrastructure sectors rose to a two-month high of 1.7% in April, driven by higher output of steel, cement. Coal, crude oil, natural gas and fertiliser recorded negative growth during the month

READ **SHARE** FOLLOW
newindianexpress.com

▪ CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA
▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD
▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE
▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA
▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY
▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI
▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR
▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM
▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM
▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

India, Italy form strategic partnership

Trade target set at 20bn euors by '29

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

INDIA and Italy elevated their bilateral relationship to a 'special strategic partnership', deepening cooperation across trade, defence, technology, connectivity and maritime security as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held extensive talks with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni in Rome.

The announcement came during Modi's visit to Italy on the final leg of his five-nation tour and reflects growing convergence between New Delhi and Rome amid shifting geopolitical alignments, supply-chain disruptions and intensifying competition over technology and critical resources. The two countries also unveiled an ambitious target of raising bilateral trade from 14.25 billion euros in 2025 to 20 billion euros by 2029.

"We deliberated extensively on enhancing India-Italy ties," Modi said in a joint press statement after the talks, and added that the India-Italy Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025-2029 would provide a "practical and futuristic roadmap" for cooperation across sectors.

Modi was accorded a ceremonial military welcome on arrival, while Meloni hosted him for dinner and accompanied him on a visit to the Colosseum ahead of the formal talks. The two leaders have steadily built close political engagement in recent years, with Meloni saying she had met Modi seven times over the last few years and developed "a genuine friendship". Several MoUs were signed covering agriculture, critical minerals, Ayurveda, science and technology, maritime transport and ports. A key agreement on facilitating the mobility of Indian nurses to Italy is expected to create new opportunities for skilled healthcare workers.

Both sides welcomed the India-Italy Defence Industrial Roadmap aimed at promoting co-development and co-production in areas including helicopters, naval platforms, marine armaments and electronic warfare.

The India-Italy Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025-29 provides a practical and futuristic framework for our partnership. Bilateral trade is rapidly moving towards the target of 20 billion euros
Prime Minister Narendra Modi

India's size, digital infrastructure and innovation can complement Italy's industrial strength, manufacturing excellence, and technological integration capacity
Italian PM Giorgia Meloni

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a meeting with his Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni, in Rome, Italy on Wednesday | PTI

Block fake NEET info, social media firms told

S LALITHA @ New Delhi

UNION Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Wednesday directed social media platforms to detect and block misinformation networks ahead of the NEET-UG re-exam. Investigations into the cancelled medical entrance exam on May 3 revealed that the question paper was sold by unscrupulous individuals using such platforms to lure candidates.

For the second consecutive day, Pradhan chaired a high-level review meet in connection with the re-exam on June 21. On Wednesday, he interacted with Central security and intelligence agencies as well as representatives of major social media platforms — Meta, Google & Telegram, a release said. "Serious concerns were raised by officials during the meet over the growing spread of misinformation related to competitive examinations, particularly through Telegram channels and anonymous online groups," it said. Officials also noted that many such channels become highly active in the run-up to major examinations, circulating fake paper leak claims, clickbait content and unverified information that trigger panic, anxiety and confusion among students and parents. "Many such links redirect users to automated bots and fake groups designed to amplify misinformation," they added.

The ministry said intelligence inputs revealed that multiple suspicious channels were being operated through a limited set of phone numbers, indicating organised activity.

B'luru civic polls: SC grants time till Aug 31

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Wednesday extended the deadline for conducting the long-pending elections to the five city corporations under Greater Bengaluru Authority to August 31.

A three-judge bench of the apex court, headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and comprising Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi, passed the order on Wednesday and granted time till August 31, clarifying that no further extension would be allowed.

The top court passed the order after senior advocate Dr Abhishek Manu Singhvi, appearing for the Karnataka government, cited a shortage of manpower due to census operations and the forthcoming special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the state to conduct the elections. P2

EXPRESS READ

Notification in 3 days for Bidadi project

Bengaluru: The Karnataka government is set to issue a notification on land acquisition for the Bidadi township project in three days. Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said most farmers have given their nod and sought compensation at the earliest. P2

Hangyo
ICE CREAM
Hangyo Ice Creams now comes from
" Temple of Seven Hills - TIRUPATI "
INAUGURATION OF
Our New Manufacturing Facility
in the divine presence of
Parama Poojya
SHREEMAD VIDYADHEESH TEERTH SHREEPAD VADER SWAMIJI
Shree Samsthan Gokarn Partagali Jeevottam Math
whose blessings will make the occasion truly auspicious
and
in the esteemed presence of our Chief Guest,
Sri T.G. Bharath
Hon'ble Minister for Industries & Commerce, Food Processing,
Government of Andhra Pradesh
GUEST OF HONOR
Sri. Bojjala Venkata Sudhir Reddy
Sri. Sameer Shroff
Sri. Arani Srinivasulu
Sri. T.V Mohandas Pai
Sri. Pulivarthi Venkatamaniprasad (Nani)
Sri. Prakash Pai
Sri. Gali Bhanu Prakash
Sri. Vinayak Pai
Sri. Dr. Kalikiri Murali Mohan
Sri Shailendra Shidhaye
Sri. Chiranjiv Choudary IFS
Sri Sushant Shetty
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Sri. Dinesh R Pai
Sri. Ullas Kamath
Sri. Pradeep G Pai
Sri. Jagadish R Pai

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
GUARANTEE HABBA
Stepping into the 4th year
ಕ ರಾ ರ ಸಾ ಸಿ
Shakthi
Free bus service for women across Karnataka
For the past three years, the Guarantee Sarkara has empowered women by enabling free travel across the state, fostering greater mobility, independence, and socio-economic progress
ವಾಕರಸಾಸಂ ಹುಬ್ಬಳ್ಳಿ
ಗ್ರಾಮಾಂತರ ಘಟಕ 01
No: 0005002 14/05/26 20:23:26
EXPRESS KA25F3020
ಮಹಿಳೆಯರ ಉಚಿತ ಟಿಕೇಟ
0 - ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು
HUBLI N/S to BANGALORE
(TOLL:73.00 ARF:2.00)
FULL : 1 * 565.00 = ₹ 565.00
ಮೊತ್ತ: ರೂ. = 0.00
₹18,943 Crore
utilized so far under the Shakthi Scheme, empowering women through free travel and self-reliance
Siddaramaiah
Hon'ble Chief Minister
726 Crore
free tickets distributed, enabling women across Karnataka to travel independently
D.K. Shivakumar
Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister
Anna Bhagya
Gruha Jyothi
Gruha Lakshmi
Yuva Nidhi
Scan the QR Code to Witness the Impact of Shakthi
karnataka information
Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Siddaramaiah and Hon'ble Minister Shri Ramalinga Reddy distributing free bus tickets to women under the Shakthi scheme